ORM
Improving on Success

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In March 2007, the safety department aboard USS *Boxer* (LHD-4) started focusing their attention on the USMC backload scheduled for April. We were headed back to the same anchorage point (off the coast of Kuwait) we had used during the debarkation five months earlier.

The November 2006 offload had been very successful in many ways, and it was completed on time. However, a pervasive feeling of "being rushed" had existed throughout the weeklong evolution. One young Marine had been injured seriously when his hand was smashed between a seven-ton truck and a steel stanchion on the upper vehicle deck.

The safety department brainstormed about initiatives that might make this evolution more manageable. We determined that making operational risk management (ORM) an integral part of the process could make the backload even more successful than the offload—and minimize injury along the way.

We decided to create a "Backload ORM Metric" that would address both major and minor hazards associated with receiving the 15th MEU and their equipment. We solicited ideas from every department on the ship, and my staff and I chose the 50 we assessed as most relevant. We listed them in a spreadsheet format *[see copy at http://safetycenter.navy.mil/ bestpractices/orm/downloads/Boxer_ORM_Marine_ backload.xls]*. Using their respective hazard-severity categories and probabilities of occurrence, we devised risk-assessment codes (RACs) for each.

Then we generated multiple controls for mitigating associated risks. Every department submitted a

Navy photo by PH2 Michael D. Kennedy

list of backload hazards they considered most dangerous. The departments also were encouraged to propose hazard controls, and many did. It was an all-hands effort. After considering the potential effectiveness of each control, we devised new RACs for each hazard. Finally, we color-coded each RAC to show risk assessments before and after control implementation.

Two weeks before the backload, I briefed the XO and department heads on the metric. My staff held training for division safety petty officers (safety reps), who, in turn, held training in their respective divisions. We asked the safety reps to submit muster sheets after completing this training, so we could ensure 100 percent contact. Our command training officer entered this training in the relational administration (RAdm) program. Each division safety rep also was required to post the metric in a conspicuous, high-traffic area within the division.

Using the metric as a guide, we generated a PowerPoint brief (consisting of 55 slides) about each hazard and how to minimize its related risks. Our mass communications specialists (MCs) then ran this brief over closed-circuit TV continuously for the three days leading up to the backload.

The morning of the event, our ship was filled with alert, assertive, and safety-minded personnel, eager for action. We received 1,400 Marines, 138 vehicles,

28 aircraft, and more than 500 pieces of cargo without sustaining a single injury or mishap. And, interestingly, although we moved at a more controlled pace, we actually finished the backload in less time than it had taken for the offload.

Everyone involved had no problem staying ahead of the evolution and maintaining situational awareness. Every department had been engaged during the hazard/control brainstorming session three weeks earlier, and crew members were anxious to see the fruits of their preparation. During the ORM planning, we were able to rehearse this high-risk evolution in our heads, and when "game time" came, we were ready. ORM helped make this evolution a colossal success!

The author is the ship's safety officer.